

14 May 1945

MEMORANDUM

Any more revealing release is strongly opposed for the following reasons:

1. The story can be kept within bounds. An explosion of a large bomb dump would seem to meet the situation. If evacuation becomes necessary (a highly improbable eventuality), the dump explosion can be amplified by having some gas bombs or shells present. New Mexico is a big place with few people living in it.
2. The weapon is in the experimental and development stage. Until its effects are known by use against the enemy, no public claim should be made for its potentialities.
3. Should the release be made, and later the weapon prove initially to be much less effective than now expected, the early publicity would act as a boomerang. Enemy propaganda could have a field day.
4. The tremendous value of surprise would be lost if advance release were given out. Most of its psychological and much of its material effects would be lost.
5. The enemy could prepare his people by propaganda and defense measure to meet the threat of the new weapon.
6. Release of information before use of the weapon could have an adverse effect on relations with our Allies.
7. Early release would seriously interfere with our efforts to complete arrangement with Belgium for further deliveries of raw

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NWD by *[signature]* date *22/9/6*

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material from Belgian Congo. It would also adversely affect arrangements now under way with Brazil, the Netherlands and Travancore for raw materials.

8. The release would give the enemy an opportunity to get an early start on plans to interfere with the successful delivery particularly by "jamming" the radar operations of the proximity fuse.

9. As soon as secrecy is lifted, the project will be subject to harassing investigation, official inquiries, time-consuming visitors, newspaper requests for stories and photographs, scientific curiosity and all the miscellany of crack-pots, columnists, commentators, political aspirants, would-be authors and world-savers--all of which will set the project back on its heels with the result that the probability of successfully meeting anticipated dates would be decidedly lessened.

10. In accordance with the provisions of the Quebec Agreement, the consent of Great Britain would have to be secured in advance.

11. In view of its effect on operational plans for the conduct of the war the approval of the Joint Chiefs of Staff would be essential.

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14 May 1948

MEMORANDUM

1. Enclosed herewith are two suggested possible forms of publicity release for use if necessary after the test in New Mexico.
2. It is believed that only two of three possible situations that could arise would require publicity release. The three situations are:

(a) An unobserved explosion not drawing the attention of the public or the press and therefore requiring no release.

(b) An explosion, locally noticed and creating more than normal discussion in a limited area. Form A is suggested for this contingency.

(c) An explosion of such force that inquiries are received from distant cities such as Albuquerque or El Paso. Form B is suggested for this contingency.

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THIS DOCUMENT CONSISTS OF 1 PAGES
COPY NO. 4 OF 6 SERIES C

Form A

Statement of Commanding Officer, Almogordo Air Base

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Several inquiries have been received concerning a heavy explosion
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
which occurred on the Almogordo Air Base Reservation this morning. A
21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29
remotely located ammunition magazine containing a considerable amount of
30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44
high explosive ^{magazines} exploded. There was no loss of life or injury to any one and
45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55
the property damage outside of the explosives magazine itself was negligible.

56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66
Weather conditions affecting the content of gas shells exploded by the
67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78
blast made it desirable ^{for the Army} to evacuate ^{their homes} some civilians from ~~a small nearby~~
79 80
~~inhabited area.~~

81 82 83
The dead were:

84
(Names)

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Attached is statement of the Commanding Officer, Almogordo Air Base.

This statement consists of three paragraphs.

It is contemplated that paragraph 1 is a basic release and that the only changes in it would be in the last sentence. These changes would depend upon the facts as ascertained by Lt. Parish at the Air Base. Both General Groves and General Farrell will be available barring some untoward incident that ruins communications for telephonic conversation with Lt. Parish. All three officers concerned will have a copy of this statement. A fourth copy will be in the hands of Colonel Consodine in Washington.

It is contemplated that the second paragraph of the statement attached will be used if it becomes necessary to evacuate a certain village that may lie in the path of the aftermath of the work being done.

The third paragraph consisting of the words--"The dead were:"-- may be added to either the first paragraph alone or the first and second paragraphs together if it becomes necessary.

It is particularly stressed to Lt. Parish that he should before making any release endeavor to get in touch with General Farrell or General Groves. However, should circumstances warrant, Lt. Parish may exercise his discretion, doing it in as limited a manner as possible only after exhausting every possible means of contacting General Groves, General Farrell or Colonel Consodine.

The purpose of the numbers above the words in the statement is so that changes may be made by number rather than by word in telephone conversations among any or all of the officers concerned.

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It might be well to point out that the sole purpose of having the statement ready is not to create publicity but to minimize publicity if it becomes necessary. It would be far better if no publicity occurred as a result of action contemplated.

Permission is granted to change paragraph 3 of the statement so as to make it read in somewhat the following language:

The names of the dead will be released as soon as the next of kin have been notified.

This will avoid revealing names of individuals when such revelation might disclose the nature of our work.

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Form A

Statement of Commanding Officer, Alamogordo Air Base

Several inquiries have been received concerning a heavy explosion which occurred on the Alamogordo Air Base Reservation this morning. A remotely located ammunition magazine containing a considerable amount of high explosive exploded. ~~The cause is as yet unknown but an official investigation is now proceeding.~~ There was no loss of life nor injury to anyone and the property damage outside of the explosives magazine itself was negligible.

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Form B

Statement of Commanding Officer, Alamogordo Air Base

Information has been requested from several sources concerning an explosion at the Alamogordo Air Base in New Mexico last night.

The explosion was the result of experimentation with high power explosives that has been progressing for some weeks under the direction of the War Department in a remote section of the gunnery ranges. As is normally the case with considerable amounts of high explosives, the effects were noticeable some miles. There was no loss of life or property damage.

Weather conditions affecting the content of gas shells exploded by the blast made it desirable to evacuate some civilians from a small nearby inhabited area.

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Form C

Statement of Commanding Officer, Alamogordo Air Base

The premature explosion of material intended for use as an improved war weapon resulted today in the death of several persons on the reservation, including some of the scientists engaged in the test.

Among the dead were:

(Name)

The explosion was the result of experimentation with high power explosives that has been progressing for several weeks under War Department direction in a remote section of the gunnery range.

As is normally the case with considerable amounts of high explosives, the effects were noticeable for several miles.

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Form D

Statement of Commanding Officer, Alamogordo Air Base

The blast heard today in Albuquerque and other communities within a radius of _____ miles of the Alamogordo Air Base, which caused serious damage in some sections of the communities in the area involved, was due to a premature explosion of quantities of material being tested for use in improved war weapons against Japan.

Every precaution had been taken to prevent the occurrence of accidental explosions. Investigations are now in progress to determine the cause.

Pending the investigation and the development of further means for preventing similar accidents, no further tests will be conducted.

The explosion, which followed experiments with material that has been progressing for several weeks, occurred in a remote section of the gunnery range.

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